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DE RUEHUB #0660 2271809
ZNR UUUUU ZZH
R 141809Z AUG 08
FM USINT HAVANA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3627

UNCLAS HAVANA 000660

SENSITIVE
SIPDIS

FOR WHA/CCA, DRL AND R-BUD JACOBS

E.O. 12958: N/A
TAGS: [EINT](#) [TINT](#) [KDEM](#) [KPAO](#) [CU](#)
SUBJECT: SURFING THE NET IN HAVANA

¶1. (SBU) Chief of Mission and spouse (providing technical support) set forth Tuesday afternoon to cruise the internet, Havana-style. Armed with a list of internet centers supplied by the PD section's local staff, COM wanted to check what he had heard from Cuban users of USINT's internet facilities as to the limitations on Internet access elsewhere.

¶2. (SBU) Our first stop on the list was a GOC site with two Internet centers. It looked promising: at the entrance was a sign listing prices -- six dollars an hour, three dollars for thirty minutes. Unfortunately, the lady at the entrance informed us the center was closed for the day. At our second stop, another GOC site listed with one Internet center, we were told they had no Internet, but the employees helpfully pointed out a hotel a block away that for certain offered Internet. Wandering over to the hotel's front desk, we were told that they used to have an Internet center but closed it down when they began to offer Internet in the hotel rooms. One computer remained for public access, but it was located in an open air patio and thus frequently was broken, as was the case that afternoon.

¶3. (SBU) However, the front desk pointed us in the direction of another hotel four blocks away. Upon arrival, we discovered the Internet center tucked away on the third floor. Five terminals, \$6 dollars an hour, with the clientele a mix of Cubans and Spanish-speaking tourists.

WHERE CAN ONE SURF?

¶4. (SBU) Using Google Cuba's ([google.cu](#)) web browser, you can access the USINT website, the Department of State, or the United Nations. You can read on-line the Washington Post or New York Times. You can access the websites of international human rights NGOs, such as Human Rights Watch or Amnesty International, and even download the entire HRW 2007 report if you have patience and twenty minutes to spare. Access is by satellite, and speeds were only a bit slower than those in USINT or in the Chief of Mission's residence.

WHERE IS SURFING PROHIBITED?

¶5. (SBU) You cannot change your browser from [Google.cu](#) to [Google.com](#), or to [Google.ch](#) (Switzerland) or even to [Google.cr](#) (China). You cannot access the webpages of some past and present USG grantees for Cuba programs, such as Directorio Democratico Cubano, the Cuba Center for a Free Cuba, or the Grupo de Apoyo a la Disidencia. If the [Google.cu](#) browser is set on the "Cuba pages" option, the results of Google searches are strikingly different from a search done using [Google.com](#). Typing in USINT using [Google.com](#), for example, yields the USINT webpage as the number one site. Typing in USINT using the Cuba pages browser yields a long list of vitriolic GOC sites depicting skullduggery between USINT and the Cuban dissident community.

FINAL THOUGHTS

¶6. (SBU) The Internet center operator said that users stick mostly to e-mail, not surprising at a cost of six dollars an hour. Buying an Internet card is easy if one can afford it, and the cards last for thirty days. USINT will be looking more into the evolving local conditions for Internet, and how this can be used in our outreach and website operations. USINT welcomes input from Washington, where ongoing work on programs to evade Internet filters may have relevance here.
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